



Inside this issue:

<i>Restorative Justice - My Journey</i>	1
<i>What is the difference between RP & RJ?</i>	2
<i>Case Study: An Assault on a Special Constable</i>	3
<i>Experiences of an RJ Facilitator</i>	3
<i>Family Group Conference</i>	4
<i>Upcoming Events & Training</i>	4



Restorative Justice - My Journey

By Police and Crime Commissioner Martin Surl

It was during a visit to a conference in Tallinn in 2012 that I really became convinced of the value of Restorative Justice. It was in the months before the first PCC elections when I was researching the manifesto on which I based my campaign and which became the foundation for my first police and crime plan.

At the time, there were elements within the police who weren't keen on the idea of PCCs. I'm not sure if people were ordered not to speak to me, but getting any information out of the Constabulary during that period was very difficult. Looking back now, it is interesting to reflect how seeds that were planted thousands of miles away should have grown and blossomed back home.

Of course, I knew the police were already working on the principle of RJ where the needs of victims are taken into account and offenders must take responsibility for

their actions. I also understood its role in stopping people reoffending. But I wanted the Constabulary to embrace it fully and be sure it was not just a passing phase.



So, when I was elected the first time and the then ACC came to me for funding for Restorative Gloucestershire, I agreed but only on condition it was recognised as an integral part of the police and crime plan. It had to be regarded as a viable outcome in the way that a caution or a conviction would be.

Fast forward four years and, by the time of my re-election in 2016, RJ was firmly embedded in my second police and crime plan.

Under the leadership of Becky Beard, Restorative Gloucestershire has won a number of national and regional awards and is now recognised as one of the leading restorative practice approaches in the UK. It plays an important role in getting satisfaction for victims and rehabilitating offenders.

Perhaps once derided by some as a soft alternative to imprisonment, being able to explain the impact of the crime has not only helped the victim overcome its longer term effects but has enabled the offender to make amends and improve their chances of not re-offending.

I made a commitment to Restorative Justice before I was elected. I am proud of the work done by the dedicated staff and volunteers at Restorative Gloucestershire and intend to continue supporting them for as long as I can.

Informal

Formal

Restorative Continuum



What is the difference between Restorative Practice and Restorative Justice?



Understanding restorative principles as well as becoming confident using key terms is paramount for the development of restorative approaches. The application of restorative practices is broadening, so these matters are becoming more valuable to the public. This brief article addresses common misconceptions on restorative practice.

The principles of restorative practice are: harm reparation, voluntarism (based on informed choice), neutrality, safety, accessibility (available to all) and respect (preserving the dignity of all). Two well-known restorative practice models are victim-offender mediation by which victim and offender, assisted by a mediator, communicate to reach some degree of reconciliation; and restorative conferencing involving a guided discussion between offender and victim, generally involving multiple people to show the wider impact of offences. Each approach to restorative practice has a variable degree of restoration. Restorative practices can be fully restorative whereby the victim, offender and community come together as to repair harm. For instance, in a case of burglary, victim, offender and affected neighbours communicate, all experiencing harm reparation. Alternatively, a practice may be mostly restorative if only two stakeholders come together to repair harm. An example of this is victim-offender mediation, when secondary victims are not involved. Practices can also be partly restorative in cases that only offer consolation on behalf of the victim, for instance support from victim services.

Restorative practices aim to attend to victims' needs, reintegrate offenders, enable offenders to assume responsibility for their actions and create a working community that supports rehabilitation. These can be fulfilled using pro-active prevention strategies e.g. repairing harm within communities helps build relations between police and young people, discouraging deviancy amongst youths. However, in many cases conflict has already arisen and so reparation strategies are the necessary course of action. Reparation refers to compensation as well as wider aims of repairing social damage caused by an offense, whereby restitution (returning something to its owner) may apply. In many cases the use of such practices is informal, however they can be formal when appropriate. The application of restorative practice is branching out: many schools and workplaces now implement restorative strategies to resolve cases of bullying and harassment; communities have seen the benefits of the practices and now implement them as to improve social capital in areas; and the criminal justice system increasingly looks towards restorative principles as to reduce reoffending.



Restorative justice comes under the umbrella term restorative practices. While restorative justice implements restorative principles, it refers more specifically to the collective resolution of crimes and participates in the criminal justice system. Although it can be used informally, restorative justice is more often a formal arrangement. Victims get the

opportunity to gain clarification on the actions of offenders, gaining closure on their victimisation. Offenders equally can explain and take accountability for their actions. Restorative justice involves reintegrative shaming as an alternative to disintegrative shaming; an offender is not marked as innately criminal but rather is made aware of the social implications of their actions as to discourage further criminal action. Reoffending rates are thus reduced in cases of restorative justice, and levels of confidence in the Criminal



Justice System are improved. The effectiveness of restorative justice was demonstrated in the Ministry of Justice's 2001 publication of an independent evaluation of restorative justice: 85% of victims felt satisfied with the service, and the use of restorative justice reduced reoffending, saving £8 for every £1 spent.

Restorative practice and restorative justice work on the premise that all stakeholders are vital to resolving issues. Restorative justice is a form of restorative practice that aims to reduce recidivism and repair harm on behalf of victims. The rising popularity of restorative justice is promising, and at Restorative Gloucestershire we hope to continue to develop our strategies for a brighter future.

Written by Isabelle Compton



Police Officer Meets with Offender After Drunken Assault



Special Constable (SC) Harvey contacted Restorative Gloucestershire to make us aware of a positive outcome he experienced as the victim in this process.

Harvey had been called to a local nightclub by door staff, which had ejected Liam from their premises. On arrival, the door staff handed Liam over to Harvey. Liam became violent toward Harvey and assaulted him, causing an injury to Harvey's shoulder.

To reach his decision, SC Harvey considered three main factors. The offender was a young 17 year old male with no previous convictions, Harvey had no desire to see him pursued through the Criminal Justice System.

He considered the assault as a behaviour resulting from the young man's intoxication, which was exacerbated by the over-exuberance of the local nightclub staff – who he considered were, perhaps, "heavy-handed".

Harvey wanted a positive outcome from this assault – particularly since he understood from the investigating officer the young man had expressed

remorse and his parents were distraught.

He wanted to meet the young man face to face with his parents, so they could discuss the events of that evening.

The restorative justice conference was facilitated by PC Lloyd, at a local youth club. Liam was in attendance, accompanied by his father Harry and SC Harvey.

"I was impressed with how presentable Liam was in his appearance – along with his honest reflection of the events on that evening," Harvey reflected.

Harvey was able to explain to Liam how he had spent his weekend in the hospital getting x-rays and how this could have affected his ability to return to his full-time job. He identified three outcomes from the RJ.

One: Liam made a sincere and emotional apology in person and had also prepared a handwritten letter.

Two: Liam promised to get his life back on track and address his alcohol

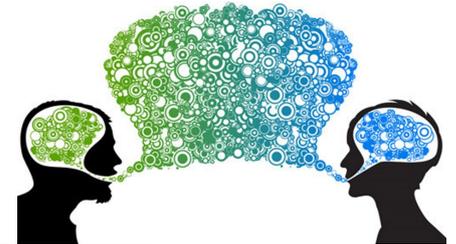
intake. He had already taken steps to cut down and introduce positive physical activities such as road biking and fishing into his life.

Three: Liam expressed a desire to become a mechanic – Harvey was able to help him find a trial followed by an apprenticeship through his contacts.

It was suggested part of the outcome agreement should be the promotion of this scenario as an internal case study, under the category of "Young People becoming adults". Liam, his father Harry, and Special Constable Harvey fully support this conclusion.

Restorative Gloucestershire would like to express their gratitude to all participants for sharing their experiences of the restorative process.

*** All names of participants have been changed to protect their identities.**



Experience of an RJ Facilitator

I am currently employed at Swindon Borough Council as a Homeless Accommodation Officer in the Housing Department, and previously worked for Swindon Youth Offending team/Swindon Crime Initiative in the Early Interventions team

Last year I made the conscious decision to reduce my hours and work a three-day week.

I decided I wanted to do some voluntary work for the remaining two days of the week. I read an article in the Gloucestershire Echo about Restorative Justice, and decided to apply to become a volunteer facilitator.

I have been involved in about ten

cases and have gone to Conference on two occasions, both with successful outcomes.

One recent case we worked with a young person who, to put it lightly, was a one-person crime wave in Gloucester. By working with the young person, family supporters and the person who was harmed, we were able to help reduce his offending and bring him and the person he harmed to Conference where the case was brought to a successful conclusion.

I believe in the Restorative Justice ethos, and believe it is a good way to repair harm in the community and in schools and hopefully reduce the cost to schools of excluding pupils to pupil referral units.



Gerry Duckworth

Restorative Justice is also a good way of working with young people to reduce crime or stopping committing further offending in the first place.

I have enjoyed my first year working with Restorative Gloucestershire, my fellow volunteers, and feel that we are well supported by Becky and her team.

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Follow us on Twitter: @RJGlos

*Bringing people together to put
things right*

Upcoming Events and Training

- 18th-25th November: International RJ Week.
- 22nd November: Restorative Together event featuring Jo Berry, in Salisbury.
- 1st December: Volunteer Group supervision.
- 11th-13th December: RJ Practitioner Training.

Please get in touch if you would like further information about upcoming events.

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Family Group Conference

As well as facilitating restorative interventions with victims and offenders Restorative Gloucestershire also facilitates interventions with offenders and their families. The purpose is to help maintain or repair relationships. The format of the work is similar to that with victims and offenders, as the families of offenders have also been harmed and in many cases require answers and perhaps an apology. They may also need to put boundaries in place around what happens in the future, what sort of support can be offered, what type of contact will they want and when all this can be reviewed?



Families are an important area of support for people who have offended but often keep away because they do not know how, or feel confident to talk openly about what has happened and what needs to happen to support their family member after release. Family restorative interventions give family members an opportunity to discuss what support looks like now and in the future in a safe, controlled environment.

We have facilitated a number of cases where parents want talk about how they have been affected and to support their sons or daughters upon release but have needed to say exactly how they are prepared to help. Those being released also want to discuss their needs. A facilitated conference enables issues to be addressed and a plan for the future drawn up, with a date for review. Restorative Family Interventions usually plan to have a review meeting with all participants after an agreed time, as the level and type of support may change as the relationship develops.

Family interventions can also be an opportunity for daughters and sons to hold their parents to account, where they have been harmed or affected by offending behaviour.

We have successfully facilitated family cases that have involved theft, fraud, burglary and murder. It is important to remember that whilst there are many agencies supporting offenders on release, the family can be one of the most effective sources of support and restorative practice can help enable this.

